



**United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

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**Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
Owens Lake Groundwater Monitoring Well Right-of-Way
Inyo County, California
(DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0050-EA)**

One of the primary purposes for preparing an environmental assessment (EA) is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). As defined in 40 CFR 1508.13, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why a federal agency action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an EIS will therefore not be prepared. The regulations specify that both the context and intensity of effects be considered when determining significance (40 CFR 1508.27). This document presents the findings of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Bishop Field Manager concerning the selected alternative (Proposed Action) for the issuance of a four (4) year + four (4) month renewable monitoring well right-of-way (ROW) CACA 054550 to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) for a groundwater monitoring well, as described and analyzed in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0050-EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact and Land Use Plan Conformance Determination

I have reviewed EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0050-EA which includes the identification, explanation, and resolution of any potentially significant effects on the human environment that would result from implementation of the selected alternative (Proposed Action) for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a Groundwater Monitoring Well near Owens Lake, California. Based on my review of the environmental analyses, I have determined that the selected alternative does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. None of the effects identified, including the direct, indirect and cumulative effects, in the environmental analyses meet the definition of significance either in context or intensity as outlined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an EIS is not required and will not be prepared.

I have also reviewed the *Bishop Resource Management Plan Record of Decision* (Bishop RMP) and determined that the selected alternative does conform to the terms and conditions of the applicable land use plan as defined at 43 CFR 1601.0-5(b) and as required by 43 CFR 1610.5-3(b). Specifically, the Bishop RMP provides that "Management will be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield" pursuant to

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Section 102 (a)(7) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (General Policies, Page 8, No. 1).

Pursuant to Section 501(a)(1-7) of the FLPMA, the BLM is authorized to grant rights-of-ways, amendments, and temporary use permits for uses such as pipelines, roads, power lines, wells, and other facilities on the public lands for the public good.

In addition, the selected alternative is consistent with the Area Manager's Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, and Decisions prescribed by the Bishop RMP.

Therefore, I will issue a four (4) year + four (4) month renewable monitoring well right-of-way (ROW) CACA 054550 to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for a groundwater monitoring well as described and analyzed under the Proposed Action Alternative in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0050-EA. The ROW grant document will include all the standard ROW stipulations and mitigation measures.

A separate decision record for the selected alternative based on the analyses provided in the EA and this associated FONSI will be used to issue the ROW. The decision record will include a description of administrative remedies and appeal procedures that may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by my decision to issue this ROW.

Rationale for Finding of No Significant Impact

My finding is based on consideration of both the context (40 CFR 1508.27(a)) and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27(b)) of the effects identified in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0050-EA as summarized below:

Context

The proposed action is the issuance of a four (4) year + four (4) month renewable monitoring well right-of-way (ROW) CACA 054550 to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a groundwater monitoring well located near Owens Lake, California.

The proposed well would be drilled to a depth of about 100 feet using a sonic well driller. The well would only be used for obtaining ground water samples and depth. No water removal would take place. The well would be cased and a 4 foot by 4 foot concrete pad would be installed around the case. Four steel posts would be installed at each corner to protect the well casing. A small battery operated data logger would be placed at the casing. The data logger would require a monthly visit to removed logged information.

Access to the site would be on existing 10 foot wide dirt roads. No road construction or maintenance would be needed. The road bisects a dried ephemeral playa where the well would be located. No vegetation would be disturbed since the access road cuts

through the playa. Any surface disturbance from well construction activities would be smoothed flat. All equipment would be sprayed off to remove any accumulated dirt or vegetation prior to entering public land. A water truck would provide dust control during the construction. Any type of burrows would be avoided.

The beneficial and adverse effects expected from the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a groundwater monitoring well are site specific and localized in scale. None of the effects associated with the proposed action are considered measureable at the regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

Intensity

I have considered the intensity and severity of effects anticipated from the issuance of a four (4) year + four (4) month renewable monitoring well right-of-way (ROW) CACA 054550 to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a groundwater monitoring well located near Owens Lake, California as described and analyzed under the Proposed Action Alternative in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2011-0050-EA. My consideration of the ten "significance" criteria identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b) is summarized below:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA provides a description of both beneficial and adverse effects expected from implementation of the proposed action. Primary effects are briefly summarized below.

Beneficial Effects

The primary beneficial effects are obtaining the site specific groundwater information of quality and quantity of the water aquifer at the playa lake area. This information will be used in association with thirteen other groundwater monitoring wells currently being installed by LADWP. This aquifer information will be used to document LADWP water management activities in the Owens Valley and Owens Lake basin.

Overall, the magnitude of the predicted beneficial effects are limited and restricted to the local scale.

Adverse Effects

There are no measureable long-term adverse effects predicted as a result of the proposed action. There may be some short-term disturbance and displacement of wildlife in the immediate project vicinity as the result of noise and human activity associated with well construction. Displacement and disturbance impacts will be short-term and no measureable long-term detrimental effects are expected. Overall, the magnitude of the predicted adverse effects are limited and restricted to the local scale.

Conclusion

The EA provided a description of both beneficial and adverse effects expected from implementation of the proposed action. The magnitude of both the predicted beneficial effects and the predicted adverse effects of the proposed action are minimal and restricted to the local scale. None of the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects associated with the proposed action are considered significant, either individually or cumulatively, based on the analyses provided in the EA. In addition, none of the predicted adverse effects are considered significant, even when evaluated independent of the beneficial effects that will occur from implementation of the proposed action.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

I have determined that implementation the proposed action would not affect public health or safety. The installation of a monitoring well where no water would be removed or transported will not result in any impacts to adjacent water wells or surface water resources. Public health and safety will not be affected by the installation of a groundwater monitoring well.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The proposed project site is not characterized by proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Implementation of the proposed action will have no effect on any historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the surrounding geographic area.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The installation of a groundwater monitoring well will have little effect on the quality of the human environment. None of the anticipated effects identified in the EA are considered highly controversial.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The proposed action is not unique or unusual. The effects of installing a groundwater monitoring well are well understood and the BLM has extensive experience evaluating the environmental effects associated with these types of ROW authorizations. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Any similar action must be evaluated through an appropriate site-specific environmental review and decision making process consistent with applicable law, regulation, policy, and land use plan guidance. Implementation of the proposed action will not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The proposed action was evaluated in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. No individually significant or cumulatively significant effects are identified in the EA. None of the alternatives analyzed in the EA were predicted to contribute to significant cumulative effects on the human environment at either the local, regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

A Class III cultural resource inventory of the area of potential effect for the proposed project was completed and no districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects currently listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places were identified. Implementation of the proposed action will not adversely affect any cultural properties currently listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

No threatened or endangered species are known or likely to occur within the proposed project area based on historical records, field monitoring, and/or habitat suitability. In addition, there is no designated critical habitat for any listed species within or immediately adjacent to the proposed project site. Implementation of the proposed action will have no effect on any threatened or endangered species, nor will it result in the destruction or adverse modification of any designated critical habitat for any listed species.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The EA included consideration of applicable federal, state, and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were consulted and/or considered during the environmental review process and no potential violations or inconsistencies with existing laws or policies were identified or left unresolved. Implementation of the proposed action does not threaten a violation of any known federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Official

/s/ by Steve Nelson

Steven Nelson
Bishop Field Manager

9/10/2013
Date: _____